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AFGHANISTAN

The Soviets in Afghanistan: Adapting,
Reappraising, and Settling in

June 1986

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THE SOVIETS IN AFGHANISTAN: ADAPTING, REAPPRAISING, AND SETTLING IN

SCOPE NOTE

The purpose of this assessment is to evaluate the underlying factors, national and international, at work in the Afghanistan conflict, the likely course of events, and possible alternative developments. It analyzes the capabilities and goals of the parties to the conflict, principally the Soviet Union, the Kabul regime, and the Afghan resistance. This study discusses the Soviet role in Afghanistan, particularly Moscow's perceptions of its stakes in the conflict, the major trends it foresees in resistance effectiveness and outside support, the evolution of Soviet tactics during the conflict, and the options the new leadership sees for itself in the situation. This assessment also addresses the role of other states, particularly Pakistan, but also Iran and India. It concludes with an analysis of Soviet responses to selected contingencies in the region and the implications of the conflict for US interests.

This assessment is the culmination of more than twenty shorter studies by a team that included specialists in Southwest Asian affairs, Soviet Studies, and low-intensity conflict. (See Appendix) Several of the team members have had extensive experience in pre-war Afghanistan, while others have similar expertise on Pakistan. The disciplines represented on the team included anthropology, demography, economics, history, political science, international affairs, and military science. The assessment was independently reviewed by a second team of highly qualified experts. Their views have been included in those places where they had different emphases or conclusions.

The assessment is based on a wide variety of sources. These included the Western media in general, including some sources in French and German, and the regional media, including some sources in Pashto and Urdu. The team also looked at Afghan Resistance newsletters from Peshawar and made use of Afghanistan related material in the various Foreign Broadcast Information Service and Joint Publications Research Service series on Southwest Asia and the Soviet Union. Reference studies on Afghanistan, scholarly monographs, and the published accounts of recent travellers inside the war zones were also extensively reviewed. In addition, some members of the team interviewed Afghan Resistance and Refugee leaders in Peshawar, met with others travelling in the US, and talked with Afghans--some of them defectors from the Karmal regime--living in the US. The team also exchanged views with recognized experts on Afghanistan who were not members of the initial team.

In general, the team felt the above sources were adequate to gaining a general sense of military, political, and diplomatic trends in the conflict. Several possible developments noted in the first draft, such as the replacement of Babrak Karmal, have occurred and are reflected in the final draft.

Clearly, all team members would have liked much more extensive information than was available. Reliable social and economic data was particularly difficult to get, given the conditions of war and the lack of government control in most of the countryside. Team members also noted a lack of reliable information on conditions in the Herat and Hazarajat regions, as well as on the Iranian involvement in the conflict. Team members also were divided on how much significance to grant sparse information on public opinion on the war inside the Soviet Union, both in the European Republics and in Central Asia. Furthermore, while there were indications of a debate within the Soviet leadership on the war, it was not possible to get reliable information on the dimensions of the debate nor on how the participants sorted themselves out.

THE SOVIETS IN AFGHANISTAN: ADAPTING, REAPPRAISING, AND SETTLING IN

KEY JUDGMENTS

1. Recent political and military developments suggest the Soviets are making slow gains in Afghanistan, but Moscow lacks the capacity for rapid progress and the prospect is for a continuation of the conflict in roughly its present form for some years to come, probably into the 1990s. The Soviets have made most of their gains in the area north of the Hindu Kush Mountains, where they apparently have succeeded in reducing the tempo of resistance operations, consolidating their control over key cities, and restoring part of the local economy. Elsewhere, improved Soviet counter guerrilla tactics have increased the costs and difficulties for the resistance, while the broadening of Moscow's political approach to accommodate some of the traditional peculiarities of Afghan society offers Soviet policymakers their best chance of progress over the long term--heavily qualified, however, by the difficulty of developing local support groups in the countryside.

2. The Afghan resistance, however, remains a tenacious foe. It continues to be able to hold its own in most parts of the country and recently has demonstrated greater unity in the field and among the refugee political organizations in Pakistan. Although the resistance as a whole has not always reacted rapidly to new Soviet tactics, over time it has adapted, thus restoring the rough balance between the two sides in most parts of the country south and west of the Hindu Kush. We believe the resistance will continue to fight as long as the Soviets remain, but its effectiveness will depend on its ability to use Pakistan and Iran as sanctuaries and on the level of support it receives.

3. Some experts, however, disagree in evaluating the significance of Moscow's somewhat improved position in Afghanistan. Some argue, on the one hand, that Soviet gains are more significant to the outcome of the conflict than those accomplished by the resistance. According to this view, there is little prospect the resistance can improve its organization, unity of leadership, and policy soon enough to affect the outcome of a war that Moscow is slowly, inexorably winning. If the present equation does not change, the attrition of resistance military capabilities will give the Soviets greater opportunities to establish and institutionalize their control of essential areas and move toward the achievement of their purposes in the country.

4. Other analysts take the opposite view and argue that the recent Soviet military gains are likely to prove transitory because the Soviet-backed communist regime lacks the capacity to develop the political infrastructure it needs to rule the newly pacified areas. According to this view, Kabul has failed to develop the kind of reliable and skilled political cadres that would enable it to extend its rule into the countryside. These analysts believe,

moreover, that the communists are unlikely to develop the required cadres in the long run. They doubt the several thousand children currently being educated in the Soviet Union will prove effective when reinserted into Afghan society. This view also holds that the pro-Kabul tribal militias, while useful in military terms, are not an effective substitute for political cadres. In contrast, they note, the resistance is steadily expanding and improving its cadres, enabling it to establish underground networks even in areas under Soviet military control.

5. Moscow, for its part, seems to have settled in for the long haul. Over the past year it has demonstrated a more pragmatic approach to its Afghan venture, both inside the country and in the international arena. This approach, together with recent diplomatic soundings, suggests the Soviets have lowered their original expectations about what can be achieved in Afghanistan in the near term. But even if more realistic, we believe their efforts are still aimed at gaining control of the situation in the country and not at reducing their commitment.

6. More than six years into the conflict, Moscow's slow "learning curve" has reached a point where Soviet military tactics and political initiatives are much better suited to Afghan conditions. Whatever its initial post-invasion military objectives, the USSR no longer is putting its main military effort into trying to destroy the resistance countrywide through massed combined arms sweeps that were largely ineffective. Instead, it has focused increasingly on counter guerrilla operations, on depopulation of key resistance areas, on controlling resistance access through the border provinces, and on a political policy that aims much less at social revolution than at gaining control by manipulating Afghanistan's traditional divisions. The Soviets have put into place the types of forces and methods that slowly are beginning to make a difference, but they are nowhere close to "winning" the conflict.

7. An important manifestation of increasing Soviet sophistication is the strategy of differentiated approaches to Afghanistan's four major regions:

--In the north, adjacent to Soviet Central Asia, an effort at de facto economic and cultural integration is underway, while the strategy of depopulation has been downplayed. Here Moscow is attempting to use Islam to undermine the resistance and apparently has succeeded in reducing--at least temporarily--the tempo of guerrilla operations and in expanding the government's authority out from relatively secure cities to parts of the countryside.

--In the mountainous central region the Soviets have adopted a strategy of bypassing this area, an approach that frees resources for use elsewhere.

--In the east, running to the Pakistani border, military efforts are intense, as are efforts to exploit tribal rivalries. There are preliminary indications the Soviets are having success in gaining the cooperation of a few tribes and in extending their influence in some of the agricultural lowlands, but the region as a whole remains hotly contested.

--In the south, bordering on Iran and Pakistan's Baluchistan Province, the Soviets are more isolated in their base areas and Soviet troops here show the

most advanced signs of demoralization. Military operations emphasize airpower and indiscriminate depopulation, but have made no significant headway in interdicting the resistance. For the most part, the Soviet strategy here appears to be a holding action, while greater efforts are made elsewhere. The Soviets probably see this differentiated approach as sustainable with existing resources over a long period and promising at least partial gains in most areas.

8. With only small gains to offset higher Soviet casualties and costs in 1985, the Soviet leadership continues to be frustrated by Afghanistan. At the recent Party Congress, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, while reaffirming support for Kabul, described the situation as a "running sore" and restated Moscow's desire to negotiate a withdrawal conditioned on the halt of outside assistance to the mujahideen. Gorbachev has yet to declare, as did Brezhnev, that the Afghan Revolution of 1978 is irreversible and the Soviet media have begun to emphasize the need to broaden the political base of the regime in Kabul. At the same time, the Soviet leader has intensified the scope and scale of military operations and more visibly indicated Moscow's growing impatience with Pakistan. Furthermore, the selection of Najibullah, the hardline chief of the Afghan secret police, to replace Babrak Karmal as leader of the Kabul regime strongly suggests an unshaken Soviet determination to persevere and succeed in Afghanistan.

9. Should the Soviets decide something new is needed to gain greater flexibility, we believe their preferred option will be to intensify the conflict by raising the tempo of their operations in Afghanistan, by modestly augmenting their ground and particularly their air forces, and by stepping up pressure on Pakistan. Moscow will use negotiations to probe for give in Islamabad and to attempt to construct a political solution in Afghanistan that preserves the political domination of the Communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan. We do not believe the Soviets are using negotiations to salvage what they can in Afghanistan and bring their troops home, but even if this were the case, Moscow probably would still intensify the conflict in the interim to strengthen its leverage and protect its withdrawal.

10. The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) still is in a very bad way across the board. Its Army is maintained largely by forced conscription and it continues to lose more troops by desertion than to casualties. Its effort to gain some legitimacy by holding a Loya Jirga, or traditional Grand Assembly of Tribes in 1985, did not meet with success. Nonetheless, the political and military decline of the DRA appears to have bottomed out, albeit at a very low level of legitimacy and cohesion. Moreover, the Kabul regime has expanded its control around the capital and has drawn some urban and commercial groups into at least nominal cooperation in its effort to broaden the social base of the government. North of the Hindu Kush, among the nontribal nationalities, it has significantly improved its control in the larger cities. In the east, among the Pakhtun tribes, it has been somewhat more successful than in the past in exploiting tribal and ethnic divisions through KHAD, the Soviet directed secret police, at times gaining the cooperation of tribal militias to help attack and interdict resistance forces.

11. On the resistance side, the mujahideen's traditional tactics of small-scale attacks and dispersal under attack have denied the USSR control of much of the country. Those groups that have been careless or poorly led have not survived, while those that have adapted and developed innovative tactics have become stronger. The resistance has adapted to the rural population losses inflicted by Soviet depopulation campaigns, although not without difficulty. Morale remains high; manpower is adequate; and, if external supply continues, the resistance appears ready to fight on indefinitely--barring such events as a large-scale famine that could occur if the rains fail for successive years as they did in the early 1970s. Formally at least, the resistance is better unified with the formation last year of a new alliance of refugee organizations in Pakistan and coordination in the field which has enabled the resistance to withstand several Soviet/DRA offensives. As the recent loss of a major guerrilla base in Paktia shows, however, the resistance still lacks the capacity to hold ground against a determined Soviet assault.

12. Most of the Afghan resistance will continue to fight, even if cut off from outside assistance or the use of its sanctuaries in Pakistan and Iran. Nevertheless, such a cut off would markedly reduce the capabilities of the resistance, particularly of those groups that have become more dependent on outside supplies. The symbolic and psychological impact on pro-resistance Afghans both inside and outside the country would perhaps be more damaging, leading some to turn away from the mujahideen, become neutral, or even go over to the government. Clearly, a reduced insurgency would be a more manageable insurgency, allowing the Soviets to more rapidly consolidate their hold on key areas of the country.

13. There is, however, little reason to expect an increase in resistance military effectiveness, given the mixed prospects for unity at the political level, for operational coordination in the field, or for a better level of training and weapons. Not all resistance commanders have responded with the same effectiveness to enhanced Soviet counter guerrilla tactics, and some admit the war is becoming more difficult to fight. Although we detect no weakening in their resolve, many commanders no longer believe they can win a military victory and say they are fighting to convince Moscow that Afghanistan cannot be controlled by a foreign army. Moscow's current emphasis on counter guerrilla tactics and the political aspects of the contest could make it more difficult for a diverse resistance to respond adequately over time to Kabul's tribal policy. Some observers believe the cumulative effect of the Soviet depopulation campaign has begun to wear down the physical capacities of the resistance in selected parts of rural Afghanistan.

14. With full control of the air, with command of Kabul and other major garrisons, and with losses kept relatively low by current tactics, we believe the Soviets can sustain this overall approach for many years if necessary. But a continuation of resistance even on the established scale is frustrating to Moscow and, more important, limits the USSR from making full use of Afghanistan as a stepping stone for further advances, not only in terms of bases but, more significantly, in terms of the geopolitical leverage that would come from Afghanistan as a pliant Soviet client state.

15. The Soviets probably see a policy of inducements and pressures on Pakistan--both directly, in crossborder raids, and indirectly, in tribal agitation across the Pakistan border--as offering their best chance to unlock this situation. The broadening of political activity in Pakistan could increase that country's vulnerability, particularly if Islamabad's support of the Afghan resistance was not accompanied by stronger US security assurances. We believe an opening to Iran could also help Moscow relieve pressure from the resistance, particularly in the west, but this probably would not affect the conflict as much as an accommodation with Pakistan.

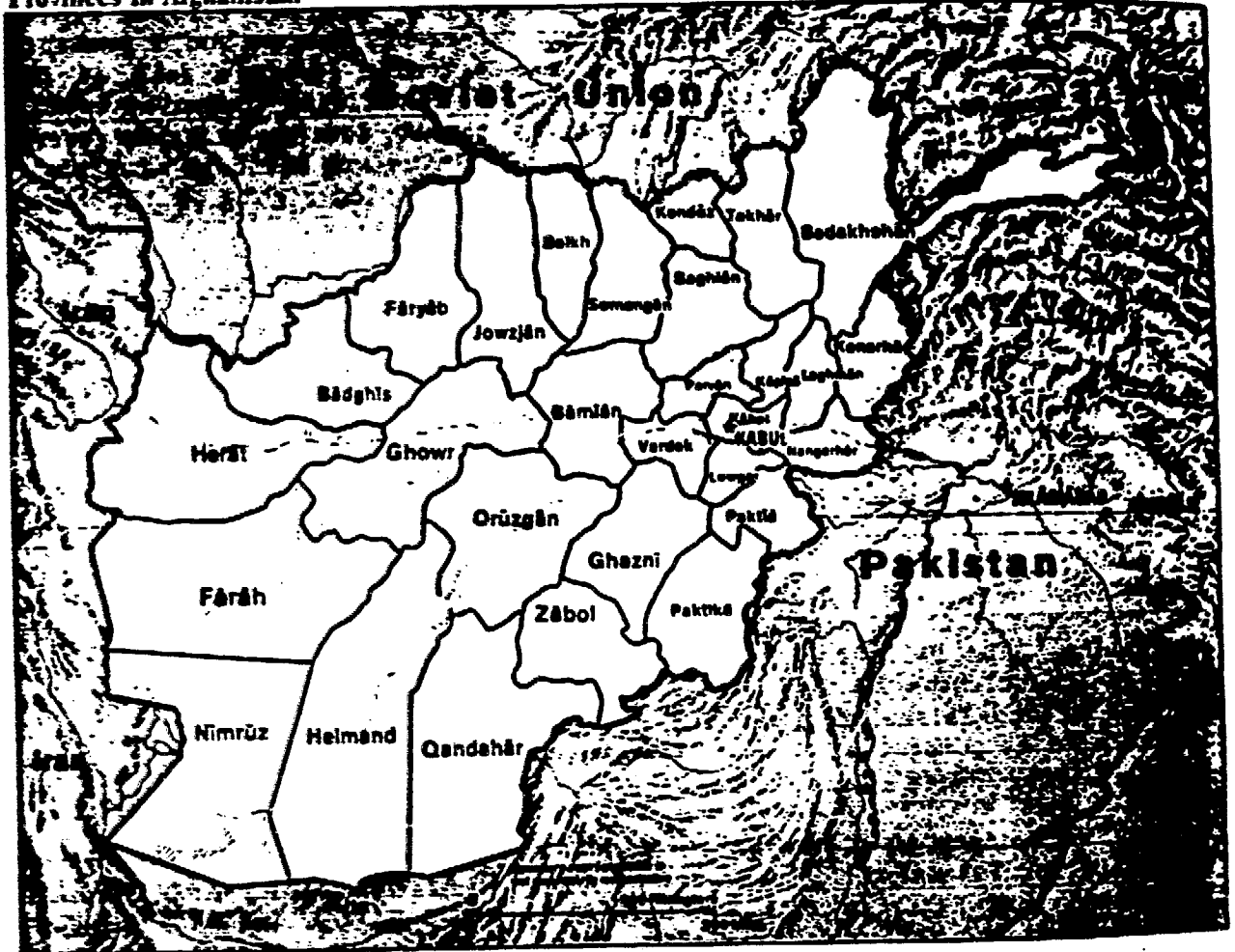
16. We expect the Soviets to maintain and probably increase their efforts to win their aims by negotiation. The very process of the Proximity Talks improves their international image, and any success in their efforts against Pakistan could be cashed in here. In any agreement, Moscow would probably accept a political arrangement allowing non-Communist forces a role at the national level, but insisting at the same time on ultimate Communist control. The USSR would then gradually withdraw its combat forces--probably over several years--and insist on provisions for training and advisory missions, as well as rights of reintervention, or retention of basing rights on the Finnish 1944-1955 model.

17. Real progress toward a negotiated settlement could open up divisions among the resistance's outside supporters--mainly Pakistan, the US, China, and Saudi Arabia. This course probably would arouse objections from large elements of the resistance as well, if it allowed for any residual Soviet military presence in the country or a predominant Communist role in the government. This in turn probably would lead to greater resistance unity and rally Afghans around those more intractable groups that have radical, Islamic aims. In this case, the war would not end.

18. For its part, Islamabad probably will hold firm for now in requiring a Soviet pull-out, although large Soviet forces near the border, the subversion of the border tribes, and bombings in Peshawar and elsewhere will prove unsettling. The Pakistanis will keep their channels to Moscow open and will move to a settlement if they believe the result will be a Soviet withdrawal. In this event, Islamabad might agree to direct talks with Kabul, but could insist at some point that Moscow, Tehran, and the resistance alliance join the talks.

19. We believe that growing political unrest in Pakistan will make it more difficult for Islamabad to take greater risks in Afghanistan. There is little likelihood that Pakistan will compromise its demand for a Soviet pullout as long as President Mohammad Zia ul-Haq and the Army retain the final say on key policies. Nonetheless, Pakistan's domestic stability is clouded by the apparent determination of the popular opposition Pakistan People's Party (PPP) to try to unseat Zia through a mass movement. A PPP government would be more prone to compromise with Moscow on Afghanistan.

Provinces in Afghanistan



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THE SOVIETS IN AFGHANISTAN: ADAPTING, REAPPRAISING, AND SETTLING IN

SOVIET STAKES AND CALCULATIONS

1. Over the past year, Moscow in our view has demonstrated a more pragmatic approach to its Afghanistan venture. Inside Afghanistan, Moscow has shifted its emphasis away from ideologically directed social change to policies it probably hopes will attract broader support and lead to a coalition government essentially controlled by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). The Soviets have tried this before, of course, and failed--largely because any real expansion of the Kabul regime would need the adherence of significant elements now solidly in the resistance. Nonetheless, Moscow probably believes that, when coordinated with a counter guerrilla strategy more attuned to Afghan conditions, this approach offers an opportunity to shift the conflict decisively in its favor, strengthen its hand in negotiations, allow it to lower its military presence, and ultimately achieve a political solution that preserves its hold over the country.

2. We believe, Moscow's initiatives suggest the Soviets have lowered their expectations about what can be achieved in Afghanistan over what timeframes. But even if more realistic, their efforts we believe are still aimed at gaining control of the situation in the country and not at reducing their commitment. The Soviets may well now calculate they will have to construct an interim, coalition regime and live with it for a considerable period of time. If successful, Moscow may hope one day to withdraw from a relatively stable Afghanistan while maintaining the pretense of leaving behind a formally neutral, non-Communist regime.

The Soviet Stakes

3. Afghanistan remains a country of strong, but not vital, importance to the USSR. According to most experts, Moscow initially intervened when its long nurtured strategic investment there appeared on the verge of collapse in 1979, amid the near ruin of the PDPA regime and the rise of a strong tribal and Islamicist opposition. The view from Moscow of the external stakes of the conflict probably has not fundamentally altered in the more than six years since the Soviet invasion. In our analysis, these considerations are:

4. **National Security:** The Soviets still probably do not see any alternative to their military presence that would leave a relatively stable, "neutral" state along a sensitive border. Moscow has to be concerned that a failure in Afghanistan would not only be a severe blow to its national prestige and ideological pretensions, but could hearten nascent Islamicist forces in its own Central Asian republics, as well as home grown nationalisms in Eastern Europe. It would be a poor precedent indeed to allow an avowedly Marxist-Leninist regime, especially one so embraced by the Soviet Union, to

fail to a popular insurrection of its own people. In addition, the factor of prestige in particular carries much force in the light of the USSR's major military commitment and its inability after six years to subdue the resistance.

5. Ideology: For some in the Kremlin, at least, the stake here may not only be the USSR's commitment to the Communist regime in Kabul, but also its longstanding self-imposed obligation to provide support for struggling Marxist revolutionaries everywhere. The whole concept of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as the fount of inspiration, leadership, and aid for the whole Communist movement would be damaged should the Soviets fail in Afghanistan.

6. Strategic Interests: Moscow has historically seen Afghanistan as a strategic prize well worth pursuing. Afghanistan still represents an opportunity to secure a palpable advance in the global competition that frames Soviet thinking and Moscow may calculate that the demands of its expansionist Third World policy in general call for a forceful hold on the country. Once it has consolidated Communist rule, Moscow probably calculates Soviet foreign policy preferences would carry much greater weight in Islamabad, New Delhi, and Tehran. Already, the USSR has gained increased diplomatic representation in the Persian Gulf, an indication of enhanced leverage in the strategic calculations of the local states and a long-term advantage that easily outweighs the probably temporary ill-will the war has produced. Probably it would expect its influence to begin to overtake that of the United States in Pakistan. The Soviets already are well positioned to meddle in the local animosities of the region, e.g., to establish tribal allies and clients, to encourage Baluch and Pakhtun separatism, and to play upon the bitter rivalry between India and Pakistan.

7. Doubtless, whatever their initial reasons for invading, the Soviets see, over the long term, future strategic opportunities growing out of their hold on Afghanistan to be exploited once they have consolidated their grip when the time is right. As a forward base, Afghanistan would provide better air coverage of the Strait of Hormuz, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, as well as staging areas for airborne and regular forces that might find opportunities for crisis intervention and conventional campaigns to the south. Certainly, the USSR would be better positioned for future political and military contingencies concerning Iran. Moscow would balance future opportunities in this region against priorities in areas of more vital interest, such as in Europe, or possible accommodations with China or the US.

The Gorbachev Perspective

8. Although we lack direct evidence, the Afghanistan question almost certainly has been reviewed extensively by Gorbachev and his new team. So far, we have detected no evidence to suggest any basic revision of Moscow's appraisal of the stakes. There has been increased attention, since Gorbachev's accession to power, to broadening the base of the government in Kabul. In addition, the USSR's readiness to withdraw its forces--under stated conditions--has been given high-level publicity. So far, these moves appear to have a tactical character and do not signal any increased readiness to make tangible concessions.

9. Referring to Afghanistan at the Soviet Party Congress in February, Gorbachev depicted primary concern for secure Soviet borders and, secondarily, about Afghan sovereignty. He also stated that, as a consequence of "imperialist" intervention, Afghanistan has become a "running sore," a description that appears to portray the Soviet experience in Afghanistan in comparatively pessimistic terms. Gorbachev added that the Soviet Union wished to bring its forces home "in the near future," provided a political settlement is achieved that guarantees the end of foreign aid to the resistance. Gorbachev neglected to restate an ideological commitment to helping the Kabul government, but he did include Afghanistan in a discussion of "vital national interest."

10. These formulations gain significance when viewed alongside Gorbachev's conspicuous failure to receive Babrak Karmal privately during the Congress--a privilege awarded to other prominent Communist leaders. This snub came after a year during which the Soviets clearly downgraded their relations with the PDPA. For his part, Karmal in his speech invoked Lenin to ask for patience for the Afghan revolution's difficulties and slow pace of advance. These developments portended the replacement of Karmal on May 4th by Najibullah, in part an effort to give the Afghan regime a broader character and the appearance of greater legitimacy. It further suggests that the Soviet leadership, in its public posture on the Afghan question, has decided on a more open acceptance of the nature of the difficulties for Soviet policy.

Internal Pressures

11. One factor we believe the Kremlin must weigh increasingly in evaluating its stakes and its options in Afghanistan is the deep and spreading public disaffection with the war, which the regime currently is attempting to contain. As the conflict has dragged on, evidence has begun to accumulate concerning its unpopularity among the Soviet population. The impact of casualties is spreading, and the intensified media campaign begun in 1985 has adopted a thinly screened defensive tone, with "defense of the homeland" now joining "internationalist duty" in the rationale for military involvement and casualties. While popular resentment of the war exists in the western republics of the USSR, from an internal security point of view, probably the most disturbing manifestations of discontent have occurred in Central Asia, where ethnic links to Afghanistan exist and interest in Islamic thought and tradition appears to be increasing. Here and in the Caucasus there have been reports of violent resistance to the draft by those who refuse to fight against their fellow Muslims in Afghanistan.

12. In our view, while discontent over the war is probably worrying the Soviet leadership and may well trouble it increasingly, it does not seriously threaten police control. Clearly, as the war has become prolonged, Moscow has had to cope with increased popular questioning of the Soviet involvement. We believe the media campaign is aimed at persuading the Soviet people that the commitment to Afghanistan is deep, that the Soviet military presence there is necessary, and that the Soviets will eventually achieve their aims despite the difficulties being encountered.

13. On the other hand, some experts believe public disaffection with the war has become so profound that it is beginning to intensify other discontents closer to the heart of the Soviet leadership. These observers contend that lack of support and the growing costs of the conflict threaten the current ruling group's efforts at social and economic reform. We believe this view overestimates the force of trends that we agree are real, as well as the apprehension over Afghanistan present in the current Soviet leadership. The Soviets probably are confident they now have the ability to contain public discontent, but might feel less so if they had to massively augment their forces. We see no evidence for now, however, that public pressure is pushing the Kremlin to salvage what it can in Afghanistan and bring its troops home.

CURRENT SOVIET STRATEGY

14. In the short run, we doubt the Soviets will depart significantly from their current course of maintaining their present military position in Afghanistan while attempting through a broad counter guerrilla strategy to strengthen their political position, and that of their client, both in the country and internationally. According to experienced observers, Moscow's direction of the war has become, since late 1984, better coordinated under a broad political-military policy more attuned to actual conditions in Afghanistan. As part of this approach, the Soviets are putting more emphasis on pressuring Pakistan, developing intelligence assets, and using the preexisting divisions of the region to put new weight on goals they have pursued for years. The Soviets may be dismayed at the limited nature of their successes to date, but may argue that their present strategy offers the most hope of gradual progress. On the other hand, Soviet planners may well, in fact, perceive sufficient progress to justify its continuation.

15. The Soviets in 1985 apparently have still tried to minimize casualties, even though the increased operational tempo of Soviet forces in Afghanistan led to heavier casualties, beginning in 1984. This desire to minimize troop losses has been seen in a reluctance to press around-the-clock operations, a continued reliance on DRA forces for peripheral areas and garrisons, and a willingness to limit tactical objectives--as exemplified by the Soviets' abandonment in September 1985 of a drive to relieve the besieged town of Khost in eastern Afghanistan. Apart from the impact of casualties at home, this could also reflect a Soviet desire to avoid further demoralizing their troops, which some travellers report is extensive and increasing.

Special Operations Tactics

16. In direct military operations, according to interviews with resistance commanders, the USSR is having some success in adapting to the special conditions of counter guerrilla warfare in mountainous terrain, most of it controlled by an increasingly well-armed and hostile tribal population. In the past two years the Soviets have made increasing use of commando-type operations involving small units with special training, usually inserted by helicopter and often supported by airpower. While these forces continue to be employed in combined operations with Soviet mechanized units and Afghan government forces, particularly in the large border interdiction campaigns,

the recent tendency is toward a greater use of heliborne assaults independent of mechanized ground sweeps. These operations show an increased emphasis on maneuver and surprise and make Soviet combatants less vulnerable to mines and ambushes.

17. The primary mission of these commando units is now extended independent operations to interdict resistance supply routes and night movement, and to target guerrilla concentrations and commanders. These forces have sharply stepped up operations in the eastern provinces along the Pakistani border and probably also along the Iranian border near Herat. Mujahideen sources note a significant increase in night ambushes coordinated with helicopters, the mining of trails and choke points, and air attacks against resistance supply caravans. Further, Soviet commando units are being used as reconnaissance scouts to acquire targets and direct fire support, air strikes, heliborne troop insertion operations, and possibly high-altitude bombing.

18. The helicopter remains the primary Soviet weapon system. Its tactical use--including use in night operations--has improved in recent years and has been expanded as part of the interdiction efforts, according to resistance commanders and experienced travellers. These sources also report that coordination with fixed-wing aircraft has also been improved. Helicopters are now attacking targets of opportunity that before would likely have been ignored. Fighter bombers work in coordination with helicopters as well as independently. There is increased use of the more effective SU-25 Frogfoot.

19. Although the tactical emphasis may have shifted to more specifically counter guerrilla methods, we believe the Soviets will continue to employ combined arms operations to sweep border areas, protect established posts and garrisons, and relieve pressure on besieged towns. They will also probably continue to use such operations to clear guerrilla concentrations that threaten Soviet-occupied cities, lines of communication, airfields, dams, or other valuable targets. These operations will also be used to depopulate food-producing regions, and to disrupt areas where guerrilla organization appears to be improving.

20. Periodic operations in the Panjshir and Kunar Valleys, and in Paktia and Herat Provinces, have become regular features of the conflict. The use of special forces in such operations apparently has increased as commandos have been used to hold the high ground for valley-bound convoys, or to surround resistance posts and firing positions. In addition, the Soviets could increase their use of high-altitude bombing, particularly in those areas where guerrilla bases are well-protected from lower flying aircraft. The efficacy of such attacks, when directed against guerrilla forces, depends heavily on timely intelligence concerning enemy troop concentrations and supply movement, which may explain the lack of Soviet success with this tactic. Such bombing against static targets--villages, crops, fragile irrigation systems--may however increase.

Development of Friendly Local Forces

21. The Soviets are trying to develop a broad range of DRA forces: political, party, KHAD, and military, according to various reliable sources

Certainly an important element in Moscow's counter guerrilla strategy--and one that has both political and military aspects--is the effort to develop pro-regime militias, both by purchase and by exploiting old tribal animosities. There are increasing reports of Soviet special operations units cooperating with DRA militia units, including tribal and village militias, enabling the Soviets in some instances to use local knowledge of resistance movements and terrain to attack mujahideen groups and supply lines. A stronger KHAD is a key element in the Soviet reconnaissance and intelligence network. Although such tribal militias have been notably unreliable in the past--they often have turned their weapons against Soviet/DRA forces--apparently the Soviets recently have had somewhat greater success in gaining the cooperation of several tribes and numbers of detribalized Pakhtuns, particularly in Paktia and Nangrahar Provinces.

22. The use of tribal militias alongside Soviet special forces is potentially a most effective tactic, in our view, as it could enable Soviet units to fight the mujahideen on their own ground--in effect to "out-guerrilla the guerrillas" by using the same tactics along with their superior firepower and access to air support. Although we believe the segmented nature of Afghan tribal society puts natural limits on how far the Soviets can succeed with this tactic, the winning over of key tribes in strategic areas certainly would improve their position and make life more difficult for the resistance. Further, Moscow and Kabul can interpret any breach in the wall of common resistance as a gain for their side. Militias can also give the local inhabitants a personal stake in opposing the resistance, although more often than not this probably would result more from a desire for peace rather than real support for Kabul. But even so, the DRA would gain in the long term from the tacit acceptance of its governmental authority.

Attacking the Resistance Infrastructure

23. The Soviets clearly are waging a war against the sources of insurgent support in the countryside, according to numerous sources. This involves the widespread killing and wounding of civilians in the rural areas, the looting and burning of villages, and the destruction of crops and livestock. We judge this is meant to drain the ocean in which the resistance swims, depriving it of food, other logistical support, and tactical intelligence from the local population, as well as reducing its pool of future recruits. The resulting flow of refugees brings many Afghans to Kabul, where the regime's possibilities for political control are better, and to Pakistan, where ensuing pressure may increase Islamabad's readiness to move toward Soviet terms for a settlement.

24. As part of this effort, the Soviets have tightened control over rural access to the cities, forcing the mujahideen to look elsewhere for food and other essentials. Soviet forces have targeted resistance logistics, probably hoping to overburden resistance facilities and keep the mujahideen more preoccupied with supply problems and less with fighting. There have been increasing reports of Soviet ambushes of resistance supply caravans and air attacks on chai khanas--the tea houses where resistance fighters and suppliers en route to and from their base areas stop for food and rest.

Attacking the Resistance Leadership

25. We believe one priority of Soviet and DRA intelligence forces is an effort to eliminate the more successful mujahideen commanders and sow dissension among the diverse resistance groups. The Soviets use counter guerrilla commando forces to accomplish this, as well as infiltrators into Pakistan, where several commanders have been killed, at least some of them by KHAD personnel. In a situation of highly charismatic resistance leadership, more often the result of battlefield success than of customary status, the loss of one or two major figures can set back the resistance over a wide area. This apparently occurred in northern Afghanistan near Mazar-i-Sharif after the killing of Zabiullah in late 1984 and in the Koh-i-Safi area after the death of Shafiullah in early 1985. Kabul may hope to do the same in the Panjshir if it can eliminate Masoud, the insurgent leader there. After the loss of a commander, second echelon resistance leaders expend considerable resources trying to rebuild alliances, according to experienced travellers, while Kabul attempts to negotiate with traditional village, tribal, and religious leaders who may be war weary and who may resent having been displaced by resistance commanders. The importance given to Ismatullah Achakzai after his defection to Kabul, along with the recent amnesty, shows the emphasis Kabul has been placing on trying to win guerrillas over to its side politically.

Strengthening Kabul's Control

26. The effort to fortify the regime is aimed first at gaining better physical control over captive populations, particularly in Kabul and other cities--Mazar-i-Sharif and Jalalabad, for example--where the regime already has considerable control, and then at using this as a base from which to expand territorial control and political authority. Experienced travellers report the Soviets have continued to extend the security ring of check posts and mine fields around Kabul, in effect gaining greater control over population and food movement in and out of the city. Although mujahideen operations still do occur in Kabul and other DRA-held cities, experienced travelers report that Kabul generally is quieter today than it was even two years ago. Resistance commanders say they remain determined to take the war into the cities--where the political significance of their actions counts far more than the military utility--but they agree that it is getting more difficult to get in and out during such operations.

27. The Soviets are using the same strategy on a smaller scale to maintain and expand a physical presence in mujahideen-controlled areas, according to resistance sources. Posts, usually manned by DRA forces but occasionally by Soviets, are spread along the border with Pakistan in areas used by the resistance for infiltration, as well as along the major roads inside Afghanistan. These posts are protected by minefields, artillery, and helicopter gunships, and when necessary are supplied by air. They are not invulnerable to the mujahideen, but they can be costly to reduce. Although the posts have obvious military functions in direct interdiction and intelligence-gathering, another role appears to be political. They provide bases from which Kabul can show the flag, negotiate local cease-fires, and attempt to build up local tribal militias.

28. As part of this effort, the Soviets have concentrated on building up DRA instruments of political control, chiefly KHAD, the sarandoy (gendarmes), militias in DRA-controlled areas, and tribal militias. According to some published reports, KHAD is now almost as large as the Afghan Army in number--35,000 to 40,000. It is most concentrated in Kabul, but operates throughout the country and abroad, principally in Pakistan. It provides the dominant Parchami faction in the regime with its largest and most reliable operational group. The reliable core of the PDPA is small and deeply divided between the Parchami and Khalqi factions; the armed forces and the sarandoy remain undependable and still largely under Khalqi control.

29. The replacement of Babrak Karmal by Najibullah as PDPA chief on May 4 is the latest move in a long and so far largely unsuccessful effort to strengthen the party and governmental institutions. The Parchamis apparently strengthened their hold on state and party institutions in the recent party reshuffle. Najibullah almost certainly still controls KHAD through his former Deputy, Ghulam Faruq Yaqubi, who now heads the organization. In our view, the emergence of Najibullah on top is a clear indicator that Moscow has no intention of backing out of Afghanistan and that a Soviet troop withdrawal would occur only if the Soviets are confident that the PDPA will remain dominant and be able to hold its own militarily. We believe Najibullah will strengthen KHAD's role in maintaining political control in the cities, in attempting to expand DRA control to rural areas, and in the effort to interdict resistance access to Afghanistan by buying off the border tribes. We expect intensified pacification efforts in the southeast around Paktika, Zabul and Qandahar to take advantage of Najibullah's membership in the Ahmadzai tribe of the Ghilzai confederacy and his marriage connections with the former Durrani royal house.

30. The Khalqis, headed by Interior Minister Gulabzoi, however, retain a strong foothold in the party and government. Largely a Pakhtun faction, Khalqi contacts will have to be preserved and employed if the DRA is to succeed in negotiating alliances with the Pakhtun tribes, as was seen in the successful cooperation between Khalqi DRA regulars and the Khost-area militia in Paktia in 1985. In our view, the rise of a Khalqi such as Gulabzoi would have indicated a more serious reappraisal by Moscow of its position and possibly a willingness to accept a looser hold over a successor Communist regime.

31. We believe the Soviets also are building for the longterm by attempting to create through education a core of committed Afghans to staff DRA institutions. Considerable numbers are being educated in Afghan institutions with Soviet controlled staff and curricula, but more than 10,000 children have been sent to the Eastern Bloc--most of them to the USSR--for education since 1979, according to our research. Some of those educated in Kabul probably are among the nonparty professionals that are cooperating out of necessity in the regime's effort to broaden its base. There are few indications, however, that education so far has created a corps of ideologically committed Afghans, even in Kabul. We are skeptical, too, of the long-term effectiveness of educating Afghan children in the USSR. Those who do in fact become committed to Soviet goals likely will find it hard to adjust to Afghan perspectives or to gain acceptance when they return. Others

probably will continue to be alienated by their contact with Soviet culture and experiences of social discrimination.

Strengthening the DRA Military

32. We believe the Soviets probably have been as much frustrated by the decline of the Afghan Army as anything else in Afghanistan. DRA military weakness has forced the Soviets to assume a major portion of the fighting and to put off long into the future any confidence that the Afghan Army can stand on its own. Only a major political breakthrough that divided the resistance and brought substantial ex-resistance forces to help protect Kabul and other DRA strongholds could begin to alter this situation. Moscow in our view will nevertheless persist in its effort to rebuild a range of DRA forces that can function more effectively in counter-guerrilla warfare.

33. The Soviets probably can take some heart in the apparent stabilizing of the DRA military, although at a relatively low level of strength and effectiveness. In 1985, despite a stronger resistance and the need to commit Soviet forces to the border fighting--an area of DRA operational responsibility--there was no collapse in the DRA military, no rapid erosion of strength as in 1979-1980, and no desertion of whole units to the resistance. DRA regulars and militia still fought effectively at the end of the 1985 campaign in Paktia, and more recently in the battle for Zhawar, according to resistance sources. They continue to be responsible for much of the defense of Kabul, a role that has received increased importance with the expansion of the defensive perimeter. While DRA forces elsewhere proved unable to stand up to improved resistance forces--notably in the Panjshir IX fighting of 1985--and suffered from divided loyalties--as shown by the destruction of DRA fighter-bombers by their crews at Shindand in 1985 and the arrest of a number of high-ranking Army officers in 1986--we believe the DRA military has not further declined in effectiveness or capability since 1984.

34. We believe the Soviet/DRA use of militias has shown discernible improvement in the past year, a trend that probably will continue. The militias encompass a broad range of auxiliary forces, each tied to existing groups in Afghan society--tribal, village, neighborhood, industrial, or party--and deployed through different command authorities in the DRA. The Soviets clearly hope to use traditional loyalties and old enmities to strengthen their own position in the country. Furthermore, militias require fewer resources and can be used as a check on unreliable regular forces. Their use can also get around the Afghans' traditional suspicion of uniformed, regular forces. The tribal militias have become particularly important because of the Soviet emphasis on the border campaigns and because of their use, especially since late 1985, as a tool against Pakistan.

35. The building of these types of forces apparently is a Soviet priority, according to our analysis. In areas such as in Paktia and Nangrahar where militia presence is reportedly widespread, their use is important to the overall Soviet operational approach. Militias enable them to harass and interdict--even if not defeat or control--the resistance in areas where Soviet and DRA forces are not normally deployed. Militias represent combat capability obtained at minimal investment in resources, logistical support, and

prestige. They are capable of interdicting supplies (and turning them to their own use) and surprising resistance groups in a way that other Soviet and DRA forces, except special operations forces, are not.

Broadening the Base

36. Moscow and Kabul more than once have attempted major initiatives to broaden the popular base of the DRA regime. Early efforts stressed revolutionary change and the development of Soviet-style organizations--witness the permutations of the PDPA's National Fatherland Front (NFF). In the last year, however, the effort to gain legitimacy and broader popular support for the regime has been pursued through a revival of traditional Afghan institutions such as the Loya Jirga, or grand assembly of tribal leaders, an emphasis on the regime's services to Islam, and a broadening of membership in regime councils, such as the Revolutionary Committee, to include nonparty and interest group representatives. Even the NFF has been reconfigured in line with these policies and now is headed by a nonparty Pakhtun tribal elder.

37. The least successful of these recent efforts was the Loya Jirga, because the assembly did not emerge out the broad consensus in Afghan society that characterized earlier Loya Jirgas. Participants who later fled Afghanistan say the delegates were either bribed or coerced and virtually no delegate represented a significant ethnic or tribal constituency. Kabul was partially successful five months later, in September, 1985, with a High Jirga of Border Tribes, largely because dissident Pakistani tribesmen--Afridis, Shinwaris, Wazirs--attended, enabling Kabul to alarm and embarrass Islamabad. Another jirga of border tribes, including--according to press reports--some 250 representatives from the Pakistani side of the Durand Line, was held this Spring in Kabul under Najibullah.

38. Early this year, after Pravda called for "national reconciliation" in Afghanistan based on "certain compromises and [the] expansion of the social base of power [with] the recruitment of new political allies and friends," Kabul undertook its most ambitious domestic initiative by expanding the Presidium and Revolutionary Council. According to figures published Kabul, a majority of those added to the two groups are nonparty representatives (73 percent), a significant number of those being religious leaders (19 percent). This would constitute an overall rise from 3 to 39 percent of nonparty members in the Revolutionary Council, if DRA figures are correct. Apart from Ismatullah Achakzai, a former resistance commander, none of the new representatives is a major political figure, although a few are tribal, military, and political notables that have served earlier regimes. Others represent commercial and bazaari groups that would have to work with any regime that controlled Kabul to preserve their interests, but which probably would maintain covert contacts with the resistance on the side.

39. The current Soviet initiative to broaden the regime and end the political isolation of its Kabul client indicates, we believe, at least a tactical intent to compromise with non-Communist political interests. It probably also constitutes an admission that the PDPA has failed to create the kind of cadre echelons it needs to implant the revolution in an almost totally resistant Afghan society. In our view, Moscow probably has concluded that a

Soviet-style socialist regime cannot be constructed in Afghanistan immediately, without interim goals and institutions. The shift away from revolutionary rhetoric and policies and the increasing emphasis on the Afghan revolution as a "national democratic revolution" is evidence of this. The National Fatherland Front calls to mind similar organizations used to help establish Communist rule in East European nations after 1945. Moscow can use a "colonial policy" to make temporary gains in control, but we doubt the Soviets can secure the country without developing a cadre-based party that has roots in the countryside.

40. The Soviet effort apparently is aimed at reducing the extreme polarization of Afghan politics and gaining at least part of the middle ground, although we do not foresee a workable arrangement that would attract sufficient support to largely end the resistance. Moscow might calculate, however, that even partial success in this direction would give it more flexibility in Afghanistan and enhance divisions within the resistance, as well as between the resistance and its outside support. With a broader based, seemingly more moderate regime in place, Moscow might hope to reduce its military commitment and gradually wind down the fighting. Such a regime might also enable the USSR to begin to withdraw its troops--but on its own terms, should it decide to do so.

Regionally Tailored Initiatives

41. We believe the Soviets have become more adept at adjusting their initiatives to the regional peculiarities of Afghanistan. Along with KHAD, the Ministry of Tribes and Nationalities has been expanded since 1982 to facilitate Kabul's policy of manipulating the country's traditional identities and divisions. In some areas, particularly north of the Hindu Kush, these policies apparently are beginning to pay off, giving Moscow at least some assurance it is making slow gains.

42. In the north, between Soviet Central Asia and the Hindu Kush, Moscow's approach seems tailored toward economic and cultural integration with the USSR, probably without the complications of formal annexation. Flat, open terrain inhibits guerrilla activity while favoring Soviet cross-border operations out of Central Asia. The increasing difficulty of moving resistance supplies over long distances inside Afghanistan, particularly over the Hindu Kush range, has begun to lower the scale of the conflict in this area. Soviet strategy in the north is less destructive of the population and the agricultural base here than in other regions, keeping a larger proportion of the people on the land. The Soviets have had greater success here in controlling the larger cities and the more important lines of communication. This region, which contains nearly all the country's nonagricultural resources, is the target of virtually all the USSR's mineral and industrial projects. Economic integration with the USSR is under way.

43. Ethnic and cultural affinities with neighboring Soviet nationalities are being emphasized in the north, as is the region's historic opposition to Pakhtun-dominated governments at Kabul. Furthermore, it is here that the policy of exploiting Islam has the most potential for success for both sides. Because social organization in the north generally is based less on a purely

tribal order and more on an identification with broader subnationalisms, Islam has had a crucial ideological and organizational role in fostering the resistance. Where it remains strong, the resistance is led by educated, Islamicist (fundamentalist) commanders who still fight intensely. Increasingly, however, the traditional Muslim clergy, including some village mullahs, are making their peace with the Kabul regime. A few of them have been appointed to high positions in city and provincial governments and in the recently expanded Revolutionary Council. One individual that PDPA statements suggest is seen as a model for Afghanistan as a whole is Abdul Zamir Zarifiah, the Governor of Balkh Province and a "Red Mullah" in the tradition of Soviet Central Asia. A similar figure heads the city of Mazar-i-Sharif.

44. We believe Moscow and Kabul will continue to make their most significant gains in the north. As it extends the area of government activity in the north out from relatively secure urban bases, the DRA regime is having greater success in persuading village leaders, landlords, and resistance groups to abandon their opposition and join village militias, according to several sources, including resistance leaders from the north. In our view, this "settling down" has less to do with positive support for the DRA regime than with a desire for normalcy and to preserve what remains of the traditional village and urban order. It also reflects the less aggressive character of the Tajiks and Uzbeks compared with the Pakhtuns of the east and south. Insurgents who have opted out of the fighting probably still support groups like the Jamiat-i-Islami politically, but may no longer be able to fight for it.

45. The mountainous central region, the Hazarajat, so far has been largely avoided as an area for Soviet military operations, an approach that encourages conflicts to emerge among rival local groups of the predominantly Shia population. These conflicts pit primarily pro-Iranian groups against older traditional leaders. This, along with geography, has the effect of isolating the region from resistance forces elsewhere in the country. The strategy of bypassing the region for now has eased Soviet tasks and probably can be continued for a long period. Despite the takeover of pro-Khomeini forces in 1985, the Hazarajat is unlikely soon to become an area of major Soviet activity. If the Soviets can consolidate their control everywhere else, this area will be surrounded and can then be gradually reduced by a selective policy of blockade, military operations, and negotiations.

46. The eastern region lies below the Hindu Kush and extends from the Hazarajat to the Pakistani border. It is the theater of the most persistent fighting because of the aggressiveness of the Pakhtun tribal resistance, the critical importance of defending Kabul, and the region's location astride mujahideen supply lines. As a tribal grouping, divided into powerful and normally antagonistic tribes but united by adherence to a common tribal code, the Pakhtuns have been fighting to maintain an autonomous way of life, as well as to defend Islam against an alien and atheistic power. While using selective depopulation against resistance centers, Kabul and Moscow have adopted a more colonial-like policy of divide and rule in this region, particularly in the mountainous and upper valley areas. This means an effort to persuade tribal khans or religious leaders to support Kabul, or at least stay aloof from the resistance, in return for periodic stipends and a guarantee of local

autonomy. The Soviet effort in the region aims to exploit old divisions and enmities among the Pakhtun tribes and to find ways to activate an underlying strain of pragmatism and opportunism among many of the Pakhtuns. The Soviets will seek to make local cease-fires more permanent and to solidify their fragile relations with tribal militias and the transborder tribes extending into Pakistan.

47. In Kabul and Jalalabad, the Soviets have succeeded in gaining at least the grudging cooperation of nonparty professionals, many of whom have been educated since the 1978 revolution, and private business interests, according to travellers. This includes bazaar merchants and tribes like the Shinwari around Jalalabad that are heavily involved in trade, transport, and smuggling. In the larger valley areas of the region, the Soviets have had some successes reminiscent of their gains in the north: extending control outward from Kabul and Jalalabad, resettling and fortifying villages, and protecting them with local militias, emphasizing Islam, and using land reform to create dependent, friendly local groups. There is some limited evidence from travellers of a few Afghans returning from the camps in Pakistan to reclaim or gain land in the reforms in relatively secure areas, although the movement of refugees generally is still almost entirely the other direction.

48. We believe Kabul and Moscow have put into effect policies in the eastern region that are beginning to extend the government's control in some areas, particularly around Jalalabad. Smaller cities like Ghazni and Gardez are much less secure, while the resistance controls the hinterlands around them and the region's major valley systems: the Panjshir, Kunar, Alisheng, and Wardak. Nonetheless, unless the resistance becomes more of an alternative or parallel government, able to deal politically with tribal chiefs and issues like land reform, it could find itself increasingly less able to contain and reverse Kabul's small gains. We doubt Moscow will make rapid progress in this region, but we believe that its policy has gained for it more flexibility and greater options at the local level. More tribes and chiefs are at least talking with Kabul than was the case two years ago, and more appear to be making deals. This includes the tribes that live on both sides of the border.

49. Hilly and mountainous, but with large desert areas, the southwest region borders Iran and Pakistani Baluchistan. In contrast to the north; infrastructure development here is ignored, and the attacks on population have included the major cities--both Herat and Qandahar have been out of government control--and towns, as well as rural areas. The area lacks natural resources but has great geopolitical importance deriving from its proximity to the Persian Gulf. The current strategy of the Soviets for the region appears to be to deny it to the resistance and to hold their own militarily for the time being. The Soviets maintain major military installations in the region--Shindand, and bases at the major airports outside of Herat and Qandahar. They have recruited some tribal allies to aid with intelligence gathering and to assist in attacking resistance supply convoys--the transborder Achakzais here, like the Wazirs, Afridis, Shinwaris, and Hill Mohmands farther north, have traditional relations with Kabul and have now transferred old antagonisms from the British Empire to the successor state of Pakistan. Moscow probably will concentrate on a more vigorous pacification policy here once its hold in the eastern region has been strengthened. The Baluch tribes in this region have

been more inclined to support the DRA, and Kabul could exert greater efforts to build links to the more centrally structured Pashtun (regional variant of Pakhtun) Durrani and Ghilzai confederacies whose territories lie in this region.

THE RESISTANCE

50. The resistance forces generally have improved their fighting capabilities and political unity in Afghanistan over the past year. Although these improvements have apparently not proved decisive on the battlefield, and some of them in the political arena probably will remain fragile, their effect has been and probably will continue to be felt on the battlefield. The emergence of the latest all-party coalition in Peshawar in 1985 was paralleled by a significantly greater degree of inter-group military cooperation inside Afghanistan, according to reliable observers. The 1985 fighting showed that the mujahideen were able to raise the costs in men and material for the Soviets and to raise their own level of activity to counter the substantially increased tempo of Soviet operations.

51. On balance, the resistance declined in the north, but strengthened its hold in other areas, especially in Panjshir, in the southwest, and to a lesser extent in parts of Paktia. The guerrillas continued to operate even in depopulated areas, and food shortages, while frequently severe, were localized, according to experienced travellers. Despite their improved performance, however, guerrilla commanders say they found it more difficult to operate inside Afghanistan, especially against Soviet special operations forces. Further, in the border campaigns, the Soviets succeeded in forcing resistance groups to concentrate on protecting their own supply lines, thereby deflecting them away from high-value targets in Soviet/DRA areas of control.

Resistance Military Prospects

52. The guerrilla forces in much of Afghanistan have improved greatly from those in 1979-1980, largely due to combat experience and better weapons. Where guerrillas lacked extensive combat experience, as in the 1985 Helmand Valley campaign, they took severe casualties in a major Soviet combined arms offensive, losing control of this key bread basket area just after the harvest. Elsewhere resistance performance was much better, although still variable, according to knowledgeable observers. The guerrillas under Masoud who overran the DRA base at Pechgur in the Panjshir appear to have been well-trained and constitute perhaps the most effective guerrilla forces in the country. The increased level of weapons, training, and inter-group cooperation enabled the guerrillas to fight strongly in the Kumar Valley and Paktia offensives of 1985. The resistance forces stood and fought the Soviets, rather than operating in traditional Afghan hit-and-run fashion. While the mujahideen suffered heavy casualties, they also inflicted heavy casualties on Soviet/DRA forces, probably a key factor in the Soviet decision to withdraw short of their objectives.

53. Generally, we see no slippage in high resistance morale. It remains unshakable. Guerrilla commanders have little respect for either the fighting qualities or moral steadiness of the average Soviet soldier. They do not doubt they would defeat the Soviets if they had the right weapons. The resistance has declared it is fighting a religious war, a duty to Allah freely undertaken with the kind of fervor not seen in the West since the Crusades or the Religious Wars. This, of course, has been said many times, but we doubt this kind of religious passion is yet adequately understood in the West. Certainly the streak of opportunism in many Pakhtuns makes them want to be on the winning side, but not at the cost of losing their hearth, village, and valley. In the longer view, the more the Pakhtun becomes separated from his ancestral village, the more the Soviets may be able to appeal to his innate pragmatism. For now, however, we do not know what would make most of the mujahideen--particularly those in the highlands and upper valleys--stop fighting, but we doubt it is anything the Soviets could offer short of a total withdrawal.

54. Problems for the resistance do remain, in our view, and will not be easily overcome. Apart from the Panjshiris, who are not Pakhtuns, the evolution of the resistance fighter from traditional warrior to modern guerrilla is not complete, a fact that is also reflected in the character of resistance organization. While the current coalition in Peshawar seems stronger than any of its predecessors, it apparently still has not spawned a military command similar to that of SWAPO or the PLO. Even if it did, the absence of a command, control, and communications system would hinder implementing its decisions. Despite more instances of unified battlefield action, even the best regional commanders, Masoud aside, have difficulties organizing, much less coordinating, region-wide offensives. Furthermore, despite Masoud's successes and expanding reach, it remains that neither his organization nor military capability has been widely adopted by other groups. Generally, resistance capabilities remain confined to hit-and-run warfare. While resistance forces may have free range in much of Qandahar and Herat, they have not, since 1979, captured a provincial capital, or a DRA brigade or division headquarters. Despite the improved unity and weaponry of those attacking, neither Barikot nor Khost--both resistance objectives--fell in 1985.

55. We do not foresee any major step up in resistance effectiveness over the near term in any of the key areas--weapons, training, organization, tactics, and unity--that could have a decisive impact on the conflict. Their capabilities will improve, but at a slow pace. The Pakhtuns are extremely proud of their warrior culture and rarely suffer outside advice gladly, no matter how well intentioned. At the same time, they are pragmatic and do adjust to the lessons of experience. The mujahideen undoubtedly will absorb and apply more broadly the experience they have gained against Soviet special operations forces, taking greater care in their movement and developing "coast-watching" networks to warn of a Soviet presence. There already are instances of resistance groups trapping Soviet commandos.

56. The supply of more effective SAMs will benefit the guerrillas by forcing Soviet air and helicopter assets to adopt less effective attack profiles and has the potential of significantly increasing Soviet losses in helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft. If such weapons reach the resistance in

sufficient numbers, they could force a reduction in the Soviet use of heli-borne special operations forces. If used around airfields to attack all types of Soviet aircraft, including troop transports, the Soviets could be forced to choose between using more troops to protect their bases and slowing the tempo of the war or augmenting their forces to keep it going at current levels.

57. In 1986, the guerrillas will face a number of basic strategic decisions. They could revive the "traditionalist" strategy of 1983, and attempt to seize a town in the east that could be declared the seat of a free Afghan government. They could also try and adopt a more "conventional" fighting approach, engaging DRA units in open battle, possibly in conjunction with attacks on fortified positions to draw a response. Both of these approaches would focus the war again in peripheral areas, would shift the resistance away from guerrilla tactics, and would require a degree of concentration that could make them vulnerable to Soviet airpower and artillery. Another alternative would be to try and funnel resources into the interior and to the west and north, creating in those areas guerrilla forces capable of sustained action against roads, cities, and airfields. What the resistance groups decide to do, or even whether they decide to do anything together at all, will depend largely on the political dynamics of the alliance.

Implications of Political Unity

58. The Islamic Unity of Afghan Mujahideen, generally referred to by Mujahideen as "the unity," is in our view the most effective alliance to date of the seven Afghan refugee organizations in Pakistan. Established in May 1985, it has functioned more effectively than expected by many. Its military commission has backed successful battlefield cooperation and there are fewer reports of clashes between insurgent groups inside Afghanistan. Its spokesmen were more effective in representing the resistance view at the United Nations in 1985, and at the Organization of the Islamic Conference's meeting of Foreign Ministers in early 1986. The Unity's request for formal membership in the OIC has been deferred until the meeting of the organization's Heads of State next January, when the mujahideen alliance stands a good chance of being granted some degree of formal representation, and possibly the currently vacant Afghanistan seat.

59. The Unity in our view will remain a fragile alliance for some time to come, riven by personal, tribal, and ethnic tensions, discordant ideologies, and sometimes violent disagreements over areas of control inside Afghanistan. Nonetheless, we believe powerful influences will continue--successfully for the most part--to exert a unifying influence on the refugee political groups. A common front by external supporters, including Pakistan, in favor of an alliance helps, but more critical than this we believe is a strong consensus among resistance leaders that such a move is necessary to maintain their present strength. In part this is a realization that a united front is an essential precondition for greater international recognition. But perhaps more importantly, Afghan leaders have begun to recognize they need political unity to contain and reverse the slow but real political gains being made by Kabul, especially in the north and the areas (Kabul-Jalalabad) under firm DRA control in the east. An additional concern may be a perception that their welcome in Pakistan is wearing thin and that a united front will strengthen their capacity to deal with Islamabad and Pakistani political groups.

60. Although the vast majority of Afghans would much prefer any one of the major refugee leaders or groups in Pakistan to the Karmal regime, the refugee alliance has yet to establish itself as a credible alternative. Rulership in Afghanistan historically has been gained and enforced by military power, with legitimacy attaching to regimes as time goes on--a factor that currently favors Kabul. The alliance, however, is beginning to plan for a long conflict and is increasingly conscious it must represent a functioning Islamic order if it is to emerge as a legitimate alternative. This means the consolidation of relatively secure base areas inside the country and the establishment of a parallel government in contested areas, replete with schools, health clinics, courts, and the capacity to help reconstruct the rural economic infrastructure. Only the most preliminary steps have been taken along these lines by committees of the alliance shura (assembly).

61. In the meantime, the alliance still faces immediate practical challenges:

- The need to develop a weapons allocation and distribution system and a coordinated military strategy that can do more than react to major Soviet moves.

- The need to prevent infiltration by KHAD agents in alliance political and military organizations and coordinate the collection of intelligence on Soviet and DRA intentions.

- The establishment of joint--and better--training for resistance forces.

- The development of a program to protect supply routes and better coordination in logistics.

- The organizing of joint political committees inside Afghanistan to develop relations with tribes and chiefs that either have opted out of the conflict or whose militias actively support Kabul. Such committees also can establish an alliance presence widely in the country where they can work to keep local populations on the land and prevent them from being taxed by a succession of resistance groups. They can also foster underground networks in Soviet controlled areas.

- The mediation of personal animosities and ideological conflicts. A related problem is the need to keep moderate as well as Islamic views represented in the alliance to reduce Kabul's ability to attract support from urban moderates who might fear Islamic radicalism.

EXTERNAL ACTORS

62. The shape of the Afghanistan conflict has been much affected by the role of regional and other external powers, a fact that clearly will continue. At one level, the conflict is an East-West issue, an aspect underlined by recent press reports of a US decision to provide American-made "stinger" SAMs to the mujahideen. But for the Soviets, international problems at the regional level probably are viewed more crucially. The role of

Pakistan, in particular, in providing the resistance with sanctuary and a supply of weapons, is critical in keeping the insurgency at a level that frustrates Soviet efforts. We believe Moscow regards Pakistan as the key to decisively shifting the situation in its favor, but it is one that the Soviets so far have failed to turn, despite diplomatic threats, cross-border attacks, and attempts at internal subversion. Moscow will continue to pursue its current negotiations strategy, hoping to cash in there on its growing pressures on Islamabad.

Pakistan

63. We do not foresee a significant weakening in Pakistan's demand that any agreement on Afghanistan must provide for an early withdrawal of Soviet combat forces, as long as President Zia and the generals retain a firm grip on power. The Pakistanis not only see this as an essential precondition for their own long-term security, but agree that without it few of the approximately 3 million refugees on its soil will return to Afghanistan. Islamabad views a military victory by the resistance as out of the question, but values the insurgency as a tool to persuade Moscow that it cannot subdue the Afghans and should work out an honorable withdrawal through negotiations. It is not anxious to provoke the Soviets into retaliating directly against Pakistan, nor to see the conflict become perceived primarily as a contest between the US and the USSR.

64. For the most part, under the new political arrangement in Islamabad, we believe Zia and the Army will retain a final say on Pakistan's relations with its most important friends--China, Saudi Arabia, and the US--and its most important enemies--India, the Soviet Union and Afghanistan. Under Zia, Islamabad would reevaluate its position only if the resistance should collapse or Pakistan come to feel abandoned by its allies--principally China and the US--in the face of Soviet and/or Indian pressure. We do not rule out some procedural shifts by Islamabad in the UN-sponsored talks to relieve Soviet pressure, to satisfy uneasy domestic constituencies, or to test Soviet intentions. The Pakistanis might agree, for example, to "direct talks" on Afghanistan if the Soviets agree to negotiate a timetable to withdraw and if the participants also include the Soviets and representatives of the resistance alliance.

65. Any substantive change in Pakistan's position on Afghanistan is more likely to come from domestic political change than from a modification of policy by the current regime. Pakistan's domestic situation is in a period of flux, albeit one put in train by Zia and the Army's decision to end martial law and permit a controlled return to "civilian" rule. While we believe Zia and the Army will act to contain an opposition that becomes too bold, there is a serious chance that the Pakistan People's Party's plan to start an anti-Zia movement could succeed. If such a movement were to gain momentum in the key province of Punjab, Zia's tenure would be endangered and probably would lead to an interim martial law government under a new general.

66. Should a PPP government emerge in the near future, we believe it initially would move to negotiate directly with Kabul, pressure the Afghan refugees to leave, declare it was ending covert assistance to the resistance,

and look for other ways to ease tensions with Moscow. Even a PPP government, however, would face major constraints in dealing with the Soviets. In our view, a civilian government that ignored the military's interests or policy preferences could soon find itself replaced by another military regime. If the Army wanted to continue covert aid to the mujahideen, there is little a party government could do to stop it. Further, no government in Pakistan can afford to alienate such key allies as the Saudis or the Chinese, who undoubtedly would voice their disapproval of any settlement that gave Moscow too much. Nor is the refugee problem an easy one to solve, given the fact that among the refugees are large groups of armed, battle hardened, guerrillas who would desperately oppose any mass return to Afghanistan, except on their own terms. A PPP government might try to split the various armed groups, but here again difficulties arise from the fact that the strongest and best-armed of the resistance groups are also the most Islamic, the most opposed to compromise, and have strong ties to the most influential Islamic party in Pakistan's key province of Punjab.

67. We believe Moscow and Kabul will continue their attempts to exploit apprehensions and internal divisions inside Pakistan. The use of large Soviet operations in the border provinces is felt in Islamabad as one form of military pressure. The recent bombing of public facilities in Peshawar and Kabul's manipulation of the transborder tribes are other effective levers of pressure. So, too, is the continual seconding in the Soviet press of India's claim that Pakistan is building a nuclear weapons capability and opposition charges in Pakistan that Zia has unnecessarily exposed the country to satisfy US demands. Other devices, such as cross-border attacks, are more counter-productive, as these serve to unite Pakistanis against a perceived threat. Under Zia, Pakistan has stood firm against Soviet pressures, but a government dependent on political parties would be less able to do so.

Iran

68. Afghanistan's other Muslim neighbor, Iran, has not participated as openly as Pakistan in the conflict, although it does permit over a dozen guerrilla groups to operate from its territory, according to one expert. Iran maintains the position that the Soviets must withdraw from the country and refuses participation in the UN talks unless the resistance organizations are also represented. While Teheran does support a sizable Afghan refugee population on its soil (600,000-900,000), its support to groups inside Afghanistan is largely confined to pro-Khomeini Shias in the Hazarajat, who have used their Iran-supplied weapons to displace the old, established Shia leadership. As long as Tehran remains at war with Iraq, we doubt it will pay much attention to Afghanistan. Further, even should it defeat Iraq, there is no guarantee Iran would turn its attention eastward and forego further opportunities in the west.

69. Although Iran often is extremely critical of Moscow, it retains a deep fear of the Soviets and its actions affecting Soviet interests usually have been restrained. Tehran is acutely aware that Iran is a longterm strategic goal of the Soviets. For the now, while Khomeini remains alive, we would not expect a greater Iranian involvement in Afghanistan unless:

--the Soviets staged major offensives in Shia regions;

--the Soviets built up permanent military forces on the Iran border;

--Teheran perceived the Soviets were losing, in which case it might become substantially involved around Herat and politically in the Hazarajat; and

--It perceived the resistance was losing, in which case it might open up a flow of weapons to strengthen the mujahideen.

If Montazeri succeeds Khomeini, however, Teheran might strengthen its role in Afghanistan. Montazeri has already indicated his interest by sending a delegation to mend fences in Afghanistan. If, as some experts believe likely, Rafsanjani emerges as Khomeini's successor, Iran's policy might become less critical of the Soviet Union.

India

70. New Delhi probably will not significantly alter its policy on Afghanistan in the foreseeable future. Although it opposes the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, it has preferred to put its views to Moscow privately and has not joined in any international effort to put pressure on the Soviets. India's profound enmity with Pakistan, its fear of China, and its concern that US-Pakistan interests could strengthen Washington's presence in the region continue to guide India's security policy. Its dependence on the USSR for most of its weapons is a fact that no Indian government could quickly alter, even if it wanted to. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi has been more open than his mother to better relations with Pakistan, which helps reduce Islamabad's fear of being caught in a India-Soviet squeeze play. But the rapprochement with Islamabad is fragile and Rajiv may need to revive the Pakistan bogey if his domestic political position weakens. Only if the Soviets massively augment their forces in Afghanistan, cross the Pakistani border in force, create large-scale instability in Pakistan, or in the longer term succeed in implanting a pro-Moscow government in Islamabad, do we believe New Delhi will be sufficiently alarmed about its own security to alter its essentially pro-Soviet stance.

China

71. China plays a significant role in the Afghan conflict as a provider of arms and instruction to the mujahideen, as a strong voice in protesting the Soviet occupation, and a steady ally of Pakistan. Beijing does want better relations with the Soviet Union, but we see no indication it is willing any time soon to bargain away its stand on Afghanistan in the process. For now, China is likely to follow behind the US and Pakistan in the visibility and magnitude of its support to the resistance. The level of that support could be threatened in the near term if on-going tensions with Vietnam should escalate into a major confrontation also involving the Soviets. Over the longer term, Beijing's support could decline if it decided to modify its normalization demands to improve relations with Moscow, but this would constitute a major re-orientation of China's security policy, which we doubt is in the offing.

THE UN-SPONSORED TALKS

72. We do not see any early end to the Afghanistan conflict. Even if the principals in the current Geneva Talks reach a "settlement," we doubt this would be more than an event--granted an important event--in a longer road. Clearly, the Soviets are putting considerable stress on the UN talks and, in fact, have made short term concessions in order to keep them going-- specifically by agreeing to discuss a timetable for the withdrawal of Soviet troops indirectly in the current seventh round. According to press reports, Moscow has said it would not allow the proximity talks to go beyond the seventh round and insists that any further negotiations be held directly between Kabul and Islamabad. Some reports suggest Pakistan has agreed to this, provided the seventh round lasts as long as it takes to get agreement on a timetable. Both sides are far apart on the key issue of how fast the Soviet forces should be withdrawn. We doubt Islamabad will agree to a timetable that allows Moscow sufficient time to consolidate its hold on the country.

73. The emergence of Najibullah suggests to us that Moscow is not using the UN negotiations to cut its losses and get out, but to find a way to lower the intensity and costs of the conflict--at least for Soviet forces--while preserving its gains. In this view, Moscow is using the talks to gain time while consolidating its hold on Afghanistan and to improve the legitimacy of the Kabul regime by attracting Pakistan into direct talks. Moscow probably also hopes that the negotiations will create serious differences between Islamabad and the Afghan refugee leadership and between the Pakistanis and their most important foreign friends, including the US. Any move by Pakistan that strengthens the PDPA regime's legitimacy undermines the Afghan resistance alliance and reduces the chance of an Afghan government-in-exile emerging on Pakistani soil.

74. In the current round, we believe the Pakistanis are pressing for a withdrawal timetable that is long enough only for the Soviets to stage an orderly withdrawal--about four to six months--and to make as indirect as possible any dependence of the pullout on an end to outside assistance to the Mujahideen. Kabul, it seems clear, will take the opposite tack, insisting on a withdrawal over years rather than months, and requiring that withdrawal be contingent on a prior end to "outside interference." Kabul may agree with Islamabad that the mujahideen cannot be effectively controlled from either side of the border, and will argue that therefore a longer withdrawal period is needed to ensure that weapons stocks are not being replenished after they have been used.

75. In general, we believe both sides will be testing the other in the current round. The Soviets probably will be seeking gains from the impact on Islamabad of the fighting in the Afghan border provinces, KHAD-directed subversion in Pakistan, the removal of Karmal, and Pakistan's own internal unrest. For their part, the Pakistanis have always used the UN talks to test Soviet intentions. President Zia has openly said that Moscow may be ready to negotiate a withdrawal on terms that might be acceptable to Pakistan. We do not know the precise calculations being made by Zia and his advisors, but if they believe a Soviet withdrawal is possible over a short period, we believe they will move for a settlement.

76. In our view, Pakistan has two irreducible objectives in any Afghan settlement: to permanently reduce Afghanistan as a base for Soviet military power and to gain the repatriation of the more than three million Afghan refugees on its soil. Islamabad knows these two objectives are inextricably linked: the Afghan refugees will not return until the Soviet troops leave. Although Pakistan wants a short withdrawal period, some experts believe Islamabad reluctantly would go along with a twelve or eighteen month timetable and the retention of a small Soviet "training contingent" in Kabul, provided the Soviet main force withdrew.

77. The chief unstated issues in the talks are the future of the PDPA regime and the attitudes of the resistance groups. In our view, the Soviets are using the negotiations to gain time to make Kabul strong enough to withstand the resistance without direct Soviet support. The Pakistanis may calculate that Moscow could not accomplish this in two years, certainly not in six months, and that any PDPA regime would have to leave with departing Soviet troops or risk a brutal end. But, whatever the Pakistanis agree to, they will have a difficult time selling anything to the resistance, to Iran, or to their most important friends short of a rapid and total Soviet withdrawal.

OUTLOOK

78. The outlook in Afghanistan, then, is for the two protagonists to persevere in accordance with the tactics and goals each has developed over the past few years. We do not foresee a reduction in the fighting, if anything the war will intensify, as will pressure on Pakistan. The Soviets will continue to make military and political adjustments in Afghanistan, attempting to do better at those tactics and policies that have worked. This could mean a modest augmentation in their forces dedicated to the conflict. It almost certainly will mean an increased use of commando forces and tactics and greater efforts to attune counter guerrilla strategies to the peculiarities of traditional Afghan society as it appears in the different regions. Moscow will continue to make most of its gains north of the Hindu Kush mountains, a buffer zone that increasingly will be integrated economically into the USSR. Progress elsewhere most likely will be slow, intermittent, and replete with setbacks.

79. The strategy of counter guerrilla warfare applied regionally in Afghanistan holds promise for slowly advancing Soviet aims over the next few years, but it is a partial strategy and, given the persistence of the mujahideen, even partial success is not assured. Only in the north have the Soviets gained discernible momentum, but even there the conflict is by no means won. A better armed and organized resistance could, we believe, contain the Soviets' successes in the north and reverse the intermittent and episodic progress they have made elsewhere in the country.

80. Soviet Leader Gorbachev is concentrating on domestic priorities and seeking to lower international tensions, according to some analysts. We believe the current leadership wants improved relations with the US both in arms control and non-military areas and that the Third World is lower in Soviet priorities than at any time since Stalin. For now, according to this

analysis, Moscow is attempting to consolidate its gains in the Third World but will avoid getting involved in further conflicts. How much consolidation means retrenchment in Afghanistan is a point at issue among experts. Some interpret Gorbachev's speech at the Party Congress as an indication of Moscow's willingness to compromise if that is what it takes to bring the troops home from Afghanistan. For the most part, however, we believe Gorbachev will not compromise on the issue of maintaining a pro-Soviet regime in Kabul. Moscow knows it cannot go back to the pre-1978 status quo. The speech shows that Gorbachev is bargaining, but he is bargaining to keep Soviet control, reduce resistance access to weapons and sanctuary, and stabilize the Kabul regime, before withdrawing.

81. At bottom, the Soviets probably see no promising alternative to their present course but also are not convinced that they have exhausted its possibilities, particularly with respect to more effective counter guerrilla tactics, regionally applied policies, and the potential for political change in Pakistan. When halted by difficulties, it is a characteristic reaction of the Soviets to retain positions already won, to maintain pressures, and to await—and promote—changes on the other side that will eventually present them with further opportunities. Given Soviet stakes in the conflict and the manageable level of expected costs, this probably seems to Moscow a tenable strategy. Only if Moscow were faced with a major security crisis in a more critical area—Europe, the border with China, or the Far East—or a major breakdown at home, would it seek in the foreseeable future to extricate itself from Afghanistan on terms less acceptable than those currently envisioned.

82. Over the near and mid term, we believe the Soviets are highly unlikely to pull their forces out of Afghanistan unless assured they could preserve a their hegemony without a large military presence. To be sure, their actions in Afghanistan have imposed a certain cost, especially in terms of world opinion. But the price of losing their position in Afghanistan—including in their own minds the serious risk of severe damage to the USSR's image as a superpower and center of the international communist movement—we think looms immeasurably larger. Only over the very long term, in the unlikely event of a generational change in the Soviet leadership which led to a basic change in attitudes toward Soviet society and its place in the world, would we foresee the possibility of a shift away from the essentially uncompromising Soviet stance on Afghanistan.

83. Over the long term, both the Soviets and resistance are under heavy strain which could weaken their resolve and ability to fight on. Despite their never-say-die attitude and their astonishing resilience, the Afghan resistance will in our view suffer from the grinding attrition imposed on them by the Soviets. It does not seem to be in the cards for the resistance to surrender, however. In time, without substantial outside help their effort will probably fade, or at least be reduced to a more manageable level, but we do not see this in the near term. For now, it seems unlikely that either the Soviets and their Afghan clients, or the Afghan resistance, can force the other to quit the field over the next five years.

ALTERNATIVE SOVIET OPTIONS

84. Should Moscow decide a new approach is needed in Afghanistan, one possibility for Moscow is upping the ante. Under this alternative the Soviets would substantially increase their military commitment in an effort to break out of their present difficulties and seek an early victory. Quite possibly a major proportion of an augmented Soviet force would be deployed along the border with Pakistan to interdict resistance movement and supply.

85. We do not know how many additional forces Moscow calculates it would need to switch over to this strategy, although many experts believe even a force of half a million would not be enough to cut the resistance off from its bases in Pakistan. We doubt that military resources are seen as the primary limiting factor, although Moscow would be concerned about the costs of such a buildup, and increasingly about its impact on opinion at home. The real difficulties lie elsewhere:

--the problems of maintaining and supplying such large forces in a country with no railroads and little infrastructure;

--the possibility of major damage to the USSR's relations with China, the US, and even India;

--the chances of provoking a large increase in outside military support to the resistance and to Pakistan; and

--perhaps most important, a fear that, given the character of the war, even a much larger commitment would not bring success, thereby further damaging the USSR's prestige with no commensurate gain.

86. Such considerations probably lie behind the USSR's unwillingness to date to take this path. They do not rule out a more modest augmentation of Soviet forces if this seemed necessary to maintain existing positions, although this seems an unlikely contingency given Soviet control over the tempo of the fighting. A more plausible alternative might be the assignment of substantial additional forces to the north in order, in effect, to occupy and pacify that region as part of a policy of regional differentiation. These forces could be largely based nearby in the Soviet Union. This would pose fewer logistical problems and mute foreign reactions.

87. Another alternative is increased pressure on Pakistan. Soviet threats have served to keep limitations on Islamabad's support to the mujahideen, which is of course indispensable to the latter. Numerous cross-border air attacks and even ground incursions, as well as agitation of the transborder tribes, have underlined these threats.

88. Various factors have combined to deter Moscow, at least to date, from significantly increasing this pressure. Among these are:

--a concern over provoking a strong domestic response in Pakistan and a hardening of its position in support of the resistance;

--a desire not to compromise the possibilities of improved relations with China and Arab states in the Persian Gulf;

--an unwillingness to risk stirring up security concerns in India, which might develop doubts about ultimate Soviet objectives in South Asia.

--fears of precipitating a larger US involvement.

89. This approach, however, does offer the advantages of being adjustable, reversible, and completely under Soviet control. Military pressures of this sort could be used more intensively and then reconsidered in the light of the responses they elicited. They might be employed more heavily if some eruption in internal Pakistani politics, such as the assassination of President Zia, or his overthrow by the Pakistan People's Party, presented an unusual opportunity, if Pakistan's allies were visibly weakening in their support, if India decided to put pressure on Pakistan, or if Moscow came to feel that the fighting was turning seriously against it.

90. A negotiated settlement is another possibility. A negotiations strategy could spring from more than one objective. Moscow might attempt to negotiate from strength if it believed it was making acceptable progress in the conflict. In this event, the Soviets might believe negotiations would divide the collection of forces it faces in the Afghanistan conflict and could lead to an earlier resolution of the conflict on Moscow's terms. On the other hand, the more the USSR felt compelled to extricate itself from Afghanistan, the more yielding it might be on the resolution of specific issues. Soviet willingness to compromise would primarily be a function of:

--a profound discouragement over its long-term prospects in Afghanistan--or, on the contrary strong confidence that its puppet regime in Kabul could maintain itself without Soviet forces;

--serious unrest inside the USSR arising from the war; and

--a pragmatic focusing of policy on internal development so strong as to require a resolution of intractable foreign problems.

91. None of these conditions pertains at the present time, or appears likely to in the near future. If these conditions should someday become of sufficient concern to Moscow to bring Soviet terms within range of those of its opponents, the USSR's position going into negotiations probably would include:

--the retention of military training and advisory units in the country;

--guarantees of a major if not leading role for the PDPA in a post settlement government;

--the guarantee of the right of reintervention in specified circumstances, including any resumption of "outside armed interference" in Afghanistan; and

--Afghan neutrality, defined in Soviet terms, and guaranteed by Afghanistan's neighbors as well as the US.

92. Stating these conditions only underlines the difficulties of achieving them. If the Soviets decided to pursue seriously a negotiated solution--as opposed to manipulating the issue to promote divisions among their enemies--the Afghan character suggests that much of the resistance would be loath to stop short of total expulsion. Nor would it readily guarantee a place in the national government to the PDPA, or abide indefinitely by any such guarantees. It is likely that the Soviets' own experience in Afghanistan would make them sensitive to these points. They probably would see such an agreement as, realistically, hard to obtain and harder thereafter to sustain.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE US

93. We believe outside assistance, particularly access to Pakistani and Iranian territory, has been crucial in enabling the Afghan resistance to fight at its current level of military effectiveness. At the same time, we believe the Afghans would continue to fight--though less effectively--even if all outside assistance were cut off. Barring the loss of sanctuary or, alternatively, a significant upgrading in the weaponry, training, and logistics of the mujahideen, we do foresee a slow decline in the resistance capacity to cope with improved Soviet tactics and weapons. Those resistance bands and commanders that adjust to evolving Soviet tactics and weapons will keep the war going, but with greater difficulty and at greater cost. These groups will have no lack of manpower, as each annual crop of determined youth comes of age in the refugee camps. Better weapons, training, and logistics would make the Afghans better guerrillas in our view, enable them to exact a higher price from the Soviets, and possibly restore the rough military balance in the conflict. We see no prospect, however, that such improvements would permit the resistance a military breakthrough against the Soviets. Even if it could overcome the many internal factors that limits its capabilities, the resistance would still lack the manpower and resources to defeat a state the size of the Soviet Union. In our view, the best the Afghans can do is to keep up the fighting to convince Moscow it cannot win in Afghanistan and that a continuation of the conflict will only intensify serious domestic problems in the Soviet Union and complicate its efforts to gain credits, technology, and arms control agreements from the West.

94. For its part, Islamabad has always sought to keep outside assistance at a level which enables the mujahideen to prevent Moscow from consolidating its hold on the country, but which does not provoke the Soviets into retaliating against Pakistan in a major way. We believe Islamabad under President Zia probably would assist the resistance with better weapons, training, and logistics, if it were convinced this was needed to restore a declining resistance. The Pakistanis, however, will remain extremely cautious about going beyond this, particularly now while the Zia/Junejo regime is facing a serious domestic challenge from the opposition Pakistan People's Party. Islamabad might welcome more open humanitarian assistance to the mujahideen controlled areas inside Afghanistan, as this could limit future refugee migrations and facilitate the return of at least some of the refugees from

Pakistan after a settlement. It might also strengthen the view in Pakistan that the conflict is not purely a military contest, but a clash between two social orders, Islamic and communist.

95. Publicly at least, Pakistan under Zia will continue to deemphasize its ties with the US. Most Pakistanis appreciate the fact that US military and economic assistance has made their country stronger, but they continue to doubt the extent and durability of US commitments. Pockets of strong anti-Americanism among urban, educated Pakistanis limit the flexibility of policy-makers in dealing with the US, particularly as the political system becomes more open. Islamabad will continue to insist on substantial US military and economic assistance as the price of its support on Afghanistan, but probably does not expect major increases in aid. It will become more wary as the US elections approach in 1987.

96. We believe the attitude of Afghan resistance leaders toward the U.S. will become increasingly strained and less cordial as the war goes on, unless the resistance gains substantial visible material and diplomatic support from the West. Despite considerable goodwill toward the U.S., Afghan resistance leaders say the U.S. is not putting enough pressure on the Pakistanis to cooperate fully and ease supply bottlenecks. They also insist that insufficient war supplies are reaching the groups fighting inside. According to our interviews, the most disillusioned by what they perceive as a gap between promises and actual assistance are the field commanders. Many groups blame other groups--or the Pakistanis--for siphoning off and then selling or stockpiling weapons.

97. Although, the major resistance groups have their own agendas and ideological perspectives, and will quarrel bitterly over what a post-conflict Afghanistan should look like, we believe they will jointly oppose any settlement that does not achieve a rapid Soviet troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. The resistance leaders are concerned that Pakistan--and the U.S.--will reach a settlement unacceptable to most Afghans. In our view, the resistance will fight on and make it virtually impossible to implement any settlement to which they are not a willing party.

98. We agree the resistance will fight on for the foreseeable future, but we do not think Afghan endurance is limitless. For now, their morale is strong and capable of sustaining setbacks like the loss of Zhavar in Paktia. But the Afghans need assurance the conflict will remain a key issue on the world agenda and in the diplomacy of their major outside supporters--the U.S., China, and the Saudis. They do not want their war to become a forgotten conflict. They want the world to recognize the dimensions and costs of their resistance and to insist on a settlement that essentially guarantees Afghan self-determination. They are increasingly conscious that their struggle will be a long one, in which political and cultural tools will be as important as military ones. In this longer perspective, the resistance leaders increasingly will welcome humanitarian assistance to build and maintain the educational, cultural, medical and other technical institutions of an Islamic alternative to Soviet purposes in Afghanistan.